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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General has meetings with Pope John Paul II and Vatican Secretary of State; urges Vatican to send high-level delegation to 1995 Social Development Summit.

+ United Nations Protected Areas reported to be tense but quiet following NATO air strike against airstrip in Serb-held Croatia yesterday; fighting continues between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb forces in Bihac pocket.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights says situation in Burundi is litmus test of international community's willingness to prevent human rights tragedy.

+ Georgian President, Abkhaz leader, Russian Foreign Minister and CSCE Chairman invited to talks to be chaired by Secretary-General in Geneva on 2 December.

+ States bear primary responsibility for their own development, Turkey tells General Assembly; Romania says democratization implies reduced economic role for governments and greater reliance on private initiative.

+ Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves draft resolution by which Secretary-General could commit up to $60 million for UNAMIR for four months.

+ States parties to Law of Sea Convention hold ad hoc meeting to discuss deferment of elections for International Tribunal.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with Pope John Paul II and discussed issues of mutual concern, including the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Angola, and the Middle East. The Secretary-General also raised the question of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, urging that the Vatican send a high-level delegation to Copenhagen. He also met with the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano.

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The Secretary-General was later scheduled to have meetings with the Presidents of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Irene Pivetti, and of the Senate, Carlo Scognamiglio, and to address a special session of the Senate on the theme, "Role of the United Nations in Peace and Development".

Yesterday evening, the Secretary-General met with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Martino. They reviewed the latest developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Angola, Rwanda and Burundi. They also discussed the Secretary-General's recent trip to Transcaucasia, with particular emphasis on the Nagorny-Karabakh question and the role of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations. Mr. Boutros-Ghali expressed thanks for Italy's important role in the "success story" in Mozambique. He also expressed gratitude for Italy's offer to assist with the withdrawal of the United Nations forces in Somalia.

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The United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) were tense but quiet today, following yesterday's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strike against the Udbina airstrip in Serb-controlled Croatia, according to spokesman for the Organization. A United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) observation post overlooking Udbina was surrounded by Croatian Serb forces after the NATO action, and two Czech peace-keepers were taken hostage, but the situation was later resolved.

Across the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina, fighting was continuing in Velika Kladusa and in Bihac town, although Bosnian Serb forces were reported to have taken most of the Grabez plateau from Bosnian Government forces. The spokesman said that UNPROFOR convoys were still being denied access to the Bihac pocket, and that the Bangladeshi battalion there would run out of food rations on Friday. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warehouses were already empty, he added.

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The situation in Burundi is a "litmus test" of the international community's willingness to act to prevent a human rights tragedy, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, José Ayala Lasso. He made that comment in his first address to the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) since the General Assembly established his mandate last year.

Mr. Ayala Lasso stressed the importance of prevention in the field of human rights. He said the situation in Rwanda could have spilled over to Burundi, which had maintained a tense calm since the killing of its President in April. The United Nations presence there had been heightened following contacts between the High Commissioner and the Government of Burundi. That presence could help the country to avoid the tragedy of Rwanda, he added.

Describing the experience in Rwanda as a "political success but a logistical failure", Mr. Ayala Lasso said measures should be taken to allow

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the Centre for Human Rights and the High Commissioner to respond rapidly to possible crises. They would need lists of experts who could be contacted rapidly and whose services could be used immediately. Equipment should also be readily available, he said.

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The Secretary-General has invited Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, and the current Chairman of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Martino, to talks on the Georgian/Abkhaz situation in Geneva on 2 December. Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding has invited the Abkhaz leader, Vladislav Ardzinba, to the talks, which will be chaired by Mr. Boutros-Ghali.

The Georgian and Abkhaz parties met in Geneva last week, and made some progress on the question of an overall political settlement. They agreed to hold further talks in Moscow on 15 December.

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Although development is carried out in an international arena, every State has its own priorities and must take primary responsibility for its development, the representative of Turkey told the General Assembly this morning. He said the planning and implementation of development projects required a partnership that included the private sector, popular movements and community-based organizations. He made those comments as the Assembly continued its high-level consideration of the Secretary-General's report containing recommendations for An Agenda for Development.

The Austrian representative stressed that international development cooperation could not displace the primary responsibility of each State to promote its own development policy and efforts. An Agenda for Development should recognize that the development process was country-specific, he added. The representative of Romania said the creative capacity of the individual, acting within a supportive institutional and legal framework established by government, was vital to efficient and sustained economic growth. In the economic sphere, democratization implied a decreasing role for governments as main economic agents, decentralization in economic decision-making and support for private initiative.

Several speakers from developing countries suggested that one solution to the enormous problem of external debt was the total or substantial cancellation of the debts of the least developed and low-income countries. Speakers also advocated an intergovernmental working group, subordinated to the General Assembly, as the framework for conceptual discussion of An Agenda for Development.

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The United Nations should enhance its efforts to recruit staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States in order to become a truly international body, the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) heard

today as it considered human resources management. The representative of China said the importance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be stressed as qualified staff could be found from all Member States. The Organization should also strive to attain equity for women in the Secretariat. He added that there should be a proper ratio between fixed-term and permanent contracts to ensure the Secretariat's openness and its ability to cope with changing situations.

The representative of Cameroon said the process of restructuring the Secretariat should respect the provisions of the Charter, with emphasis on the equality of States, and preserve the delicate balance between the main bodies of the Organization. The creation of an appropriate department and a separate section for Africa in the United Nations budget were essential in the light of the continent's situation. The department would help monitor the implemantation of programmes and activities for the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Yesterday, the Committee approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to commit up to $60 million for the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) for four months from 9 December. The need for that authority would arise if the Security Council extended the Mission's mandate beyond the next three weeks. By the terms of the draft, the Assembly would assess $30 million of the amount authorized. It would also express deep concern about the renewal of a contract relating to security services for UNAMIR without international competitive bidding, and urge the Secretary-General to obtain all contractual services through such biddings.

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States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea have held an ad hoc meeting at Headquarters to discuss the question of the deferment of the election of members of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. The Law of the Sea Convention, which entered into force on 16 November, provides for a meeting of States parties to approve practical arrangements for the establishment of the Tribunal.

According to the Convention, each State party can nominate up to two persons for election to the 21-member Tribunal. It requires that the first election be held within six months of the entry into force of the Convention. The elections must be held at a meeting of States parties convened by the Secretary-General in the case of the first election, and by a procedure agreed to by the States parties for subsequent elections.

Hans Corell, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, said yesterday's meeting was an historic occasion as it was the first meeting of States parties to the Convention since its entry into force. It would decide on practical measures concerning the organization of the Tribunal, which was central to the system of compulsory dispute settlement envisaged in the Convention. He welcomed the participation of States and other entities that had yet to become parties to the Convention and commended the participants on deciding to take action by consensus, whenever possible.

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